Dear Dick, NOT MCDONALD 7/8/75

Some years ago an insurance-agent friend to whom I was boasting about my long accident-free record as he renewed my policy told me "that makes you a bad risk."

He was playing the odds, as they do.

I suppose the general principle has wide application. Even to judgement.

It is, in fact, the one element in what I do that can give me concern. I have made no serious errors save with people. Not in my work. How long?

But I fly into the face of it in addressing my own judgement. Not in the expectation that it will make any difference. Were I not so tired tonight I'd probably be doing something else, something in which the fatigue, not all of which is physical, would not be a factor.

Today I had to go to Washington to do some work in preparation for the calendar call next Tuesday on the suit against the FBI of which I told you. You'll recall your chuckle when I told you they'd told the court I know more about this subject than anyone in the FBI. Today I proved it with their papers and made another case of perjury against them about which again nothing will now happen.

As I started to return I caught the 3 p.m. CBS news. The lead item was Senator Church's statement that the committee may call Nixon in its investigation of assassinations. (This is a diversion that makes headlines and takes them from their appointed task, which would do the country more good if they heeded that.)

I knew exactly what he was talking about without seeing the details in the papers, which I won't see until morning. It is my work and I can make a guess on which I'd bet how he got it: from one I trusted, a name not unknown to you. It goes back to Nixon's vice-presidency and I'd let this man have it in confidence because I would be writing about it.

What I don't recall is whether it was in what I sent Peter Shepherd. I do know that I had all of it worked out before the last I heard from him. It was before cold weather in 1972. Before there was a Watergate committee.

When I laid that book aside and started writing The Unimpeachment of Richard Nixon, the draft of which was completed last September, it was one of the early chapters. With a full story, so full that if the committee does what I didn't, I'm confident that this long ago I did the basics of what they'll do and what they will not. Despite their authority and manpower and their beginning with my work.

All I could think of when I heard that newscast is what would happen to a book with the whole story in it when it becomes the subject of a Senate investigation and either causes that investigation or is ahead of it.

That reminded me of Shepherd's disbelief in two unready roggh chapter drafts I sent him hot from the machine. They grew into the Hughes scandal with the CIA. After that I carried it much farther, into what has not yet appeared. In fact, almost all of that book remains fresh and with editing would have a good chance of success. But my life is such I have no idea when I can read it for the first time and start cutting and editing.

At the very beginning when I spoke to you about a Watergate book you said Bantam had signed Mollenhoff and that would cream the market. Well, they cancelled out and as I told you Clark did not deliver the book. He couldn't do a book he'd want his name on, not even with his Nixon White House experiences.

And despite its significance, to date no substantial, worthwhile Watergate book has appeared.

Make even a good rehash. And on such a subject!

To me this is a commentary on publishing, commercially and as it serves public interests.

People do tend to shun and fear what is strange to them. And publishers more than most stick to pat formulas of the past.

This, applied to all of the media, and fear, more than any other single factor, I believe, account for the condition of the country today. And for what lies ahead.

I can't now return to that Watergate book. The index of Post Mortem, on cards, has been on my desk for several days. I'll have it edited by the end of the week, my wife will type it, I'll have an idea of the space for an appendix, and as best and as fast as I can I'll get it ready to print. Adding the appendix to the index will be no great chore.

Somehow I'll bring it out. I have an appointment with the representative of a printer tomorrow.

I know what it can mean and can do and if I can make arrangements I'll take the chances.

While I'd pretty much made up my mind that if I'm ready and none of the current interests come to anything I'd go ahead, that broadcast, one of so many, really was decisive for me.

I don't really think that even without commercial distribution I'll lose. Without a single ad, a single personal appearance or a single review (I sent no review copies) I've paid off all the debt on the last book and the copies out are selling others. I haven't done any promotions on it in quite some time.

Two paragraphs up I got a call. I'me having dinner tomorrow night with the man whose real name is used in the McDonald book - the one real name. He knows McDonald well. McDonald told him the book is favorable to his old friend "Sherman."

If Ramsey still has any interest, he has competition now and will have more. A major publisher is considering real crazy stuff because it has the name of a philosophy professor on it and something called "Third World" is hooked with and by now has printed what the Rockefeller Commission has ruined. The one chance that has to escape total ruin, having been printed, is disbelief in anything official.

Only trash has any chance today, commercially, in the fields of my work and I guess I'd best forget all other possibilities.

If there is anything to report following tomorrow's dinner, I'll let you know.

Best,